



Executive Summary

A Comprehensive Plan serves as a guide for making the community a better place in which to live and work over a 15- to 20-year timeframe. It communicates to residents, developers, and others what land use pattern is desired by the community in particular areas of the city.

The existing Comprehensive Plan of the City of Manchester was adopted in 1977. The city has gone through significant changes since this date, primarily as a result of the 1997 and 1999 annexations. Two-thirds of the geographic area of the city is not represented in the city's current Comprehensive Plan. The widening and improvement of Highway 141 during the 1990s altered traffic patterns in the city.

Recognizing the role that a Comprehensive Plan can play in maintaining and improving the quality of life for all Manchester residents, the city began the process of reviewing and revising its Comprehensive Plan in March 2002. To assist it in this effort, the city retained the planning consulting firm of HNTB Corporation. A Steering Committee comprised of the Mayor, Board of Aldermen, and the Planning and Zoning Commission oversaw the development of the new Comprehensive Plan.

The process to create the new Plan was designed to be inclusive. Towards that end, the planning process offered a variety of ways for the public to share their thoughts and visions for the community. The initial public forum was held on August 15, 2002. In conjunction with HNTB's site visit, a series of focus group sessions were held to allow for in-depth discussion of specific topics. A community-wide survey was mailed in conjunction with the fall edition of the *Courier*.

HNTB utilized the input received at the public forum, from the focus groups and community-wide survey, and from the Steering Committee to develop three conceptual land use alternatives. Alternative "A" represented a continuation of the city's existing land use patterns. Alternative "B" incorporated limited mixed-use redevelopment in the city's historic town center (i.e. the Manchester Road corridor between Sulphur Spring Road on the west and Highway 141 on the east) and the direction of multi-family development in the area east of Highway 141 and north of big-box commercial developments along Manchester Road. Alternative "C" envisioned more extensive mixed-used redevelopment in the historic town center area, the

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annexation of land east of the existing city limits for use as big-box retail, limited residential lot splits, and redevelopment on residential lots one acre or greater.

The three conceptual land use alternatives were presented and discussed at public forums on September 26, 2002 and November 14, 2002. At the conclusion of the public input process, a proposed Future Land Use Plan and related goals and policies were developed. The proposed Future Land Use Plan incorporated elements from Alternative B and Alternative C.

The proposed Future Land Use Plan served as the basis for the first draft of the new Comprehensive Plan for the City of Manchester. The draft was circulated through the city's website and presented at a public hearing held on July 28, 2003. Additional public testimony was accepted at a subsequent public hearing on August 11, 2003.

At the public hearings, residents expressed concern about the change in land use depicted in several residential areas of the city. While a Comprehensive Plan does not change the zoning of property, residents were concerned that any deviation from the existing land use may encourage developers to seek a change in zoning.

Based on the testimony accepted at the two public hearings, the Steering Committee agreed upon certain changes to the draft Comprehensive Plan. The modified Plan reflects the following land use objectives:

- The redevelopment and revitalization of the city's historic town center (i.e., the stretch of Manchester Road between Highway 141 on the east and Sulphur Spring Road on the west) to provide for a mix of shops, restaurants, offices, and residences
- The preservation of the city's residential neighborhoods
- The creation of a trail network to provide connections between neighborhoods and major activity centers, such as schools and parks

These objectives are reflected in the future land use map and in the Plan's goals and implementation priorities.

Throughout the development of this Comprehensive Plan, many residents pointed to the historic town center as one of Manchester's identifying characteristics. One of the goals of the Plan is to enhance this area of the city through the establishment of design guidelines for the historic town center area to ensure compatible new construction and renovation. This Comprehensive Plan envisions a mixture of land uses to enhance the revenue potential of this area and to create a "destination" point for both residents and non-residents.

Approximately 65 percent of Manchester is single-family residential. Commercial and industrial/utility land uses make up about 6 percent of the city. The sales tax revenues generated by commercial land use are the primary funding source for the

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city's general operations, as well as its infrastructure needs.

In 2004, approximately 50.5 percent of the city's projected operating revenues will be derived from sales taxes. Sales tax revenues have allowed the city to maintain a low property tax rate; in 2004, the average homeowner in Manchester will pay approximately \$15 in real property tax revenues for the general operation of the city.

In light of the limited commercial property in the city, new automotive sales and uses are not recommended by the Plan; this type of land use is not particularly advantageous from a financial perspective. New development and redevelopment efforts, particularly in the historic town center, should target a mixture of new high-quality uses including, but not limited to, specialty retail, high-quality sit-down restaurants, and entertainment venues.

Therefore, in the face of declining revenues and increased service cost, the best way to increase revenue is to generate new sources of sales tax revenue and maximize retail opportunities in the existing "point of sale" commercial areas of the city.

In addition to the revitalization of the city's historic town center, an objective of this Plan is the preservation of the city's residential areas. The city's diversity of housing and neighborhoods were often highlighted as one of Manchester's greatest assets during the planning process. The Plan recommends that, in considering proposed land use changes, the

consistency and compatibility with adjacent residential neighborhoods be taken into account. Residential lot splits and residential tear-downs should be considered on a case-by-case basis for their potential impact on surrounding uses. Any such site plans will need to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

During the development of this Comprehensive Plan, Manchester Road and Highway 141 were identified as impediments to non-vehicular traffic. A goal of this Plan is the creation of a network of pedestrian and bike trails throughout the community.

The first three chapters of this document provide background information on prior planning efforts by the city, issues identified and discussed during the development of the Plan, and various factors impacting land use and development in Manchester.

Chapter 4 discusses the three alternative future land use plans considered by city residents and officials during the planning process.

Chapter 5 outlines the primary goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. Specific areas addressed in this chapter include economic development, the historic town center, design, quality of life, parks/trails/open space, and transportation.

Chapter 6 provides additional information on the Future Land Use Plan, which will serve as a guide for future development in Manchester. The land use designations are for planning purposes and do not represent any

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change to existing zoning. Chapter 6 also sets forth certain land use goals and objectives, as well as design concepts, for use by the city in making development decisions.

Chapter 7 describes various implementation tools that the city can utilize in achieving the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. The chapter also summarizes specific actions that will be taken to move the Plan forward.

Chapter 8 provides concluding remarks about the Plan and its application in the City of Manchester.

This Comprehensive Plan is intended to serve as a road map to guide the city's future development and redevelopment. The Plan should be viewed as a dynamic document and periodically reviewed to keep pace with changing conditions and evolving community aspirations.

The Comprehensive Plan serves as the beginning, not the end, of the city's planning process. The city will need to initiate various programs and accomplish a number of tasks for the vision of this Plan to be realized. Working together, the community can ensure that Manchester continues to be a city with "A Proud Past, A Bright Future."